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Edinburgh Review

1802-1840

ENGLISH

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A

STUDY OF THE "EDINBURGH REVIEW"

FROM 1802 TO 1840

BY

FRED GATES FOX, A.B.

THESIS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

IN THE

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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

Fred Gates Foy, A. B.

ENTITLED *A Study of the Edinburgh Review*
from 1802 to 1840.

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF *Master of Arts*

Amiel Kilham Dodge.

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF *the English Language & Literature.*

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I

JEFFREY AND THE EARLY REVIEWERS .

Francis Jeffrey, one of the greatest critics of the nineteenth century, was born October 27, 1773 at Edinburgh. He was the third child of George Jeffrey, a clerk in the court of sessions. At the age of eight he entered the high school at Edinburgh, and after spending four years there, continued his studies under Alexander Adam. His record as a student was fair, but gave no promise of future eminence. While studying at Glasgow in 1787-'09. he formed a habit which was useful to him later, and which may have bent his mind towards the work he was to do in life. He annotated and criticised, carefully and systematically, not only the selections which he read, but also the poems, essays, and translations which he wrote himself (1) Two years after leaving Glasgow he entered Queen's College, Oxford, but he liked neither the college nor his fellow students, and stayed only about ten months. The only change that took place in him in Oxford seems to have been an exchange of his broad, flowing Scotch for a mixture that was neither Scotch nor English (2).

- (1). Cockburn's Life of Jeffrey, Volume 1, Pages 20 - 22. This work will be referred to hereafter as "Cockburn".
- (2). Cockburn, Volume 1, Page 47.

In 1792 and 1793 Jeffrey prepared himself for the bar, but at the same time did not neglect his literary studies. He continued to write and to criticise himself with conscientious zeal. He also attempted poetry, and once thought he would never be a great man unless it were as a poet (1). In 1794 he was admitted to the bar, but because of his strong Whig beliefs, which were deplored by his father and by his friends, he received no preferment, and managed to subsist merely, upon occasional fees brought through his own relatives.

After four years of this sort of life, having become rather discouraged over his lack of success, Jeffrey set out for London with letters of introduction to Perry, who was then editor of the "Morning Chronicle", determined to turn to literature if he could find an opening (2). He failed to find Perry, however, and returned to Edinburgh. He then tried to secure the chair of history in the University of Edinburgh, and later, a reporter-ship in the court of sessions, but was badly beaten in both cases because of his Whig tendencies, the elections being held upon pure party lines.

However, in one thing which happened about this time, Jeffrey was very successful. With no money, practically, and with little chance of getting any, he married Catherine Wilson, a daughter of a prominent professor at St. Andrews and his own second cousin. Jeffrey himself wrote that his profession had "never yet brought him 100 pounds a year", and that in marrying he was showing a "reliance upon Providence scarcely

(1). Cockburn, Volume 1, Page 69.

(2). " " " Pages 101 - 102.

to be equalled in this degenerate age"(1).

But things were soon to be brighter, for in 1802 an event took place which was to change not only Jeffrey's circumstances, but even those of the nation itself,- the establishment of the "Edinburgh Review". Brougham, Horner, Sydney Smith and Jeffrey, who had always been close friends, and who belonged to the same circle of Edinburgh talent, had for some time discussed the idea of starting a new magazine. At length they resolved to act, and the story of the foundation of the "Review" as told by Sydney Smith in the preface to his works, is as follows:- "One day we happened to meet in the eighth or ninth story or flat in Buccleugh-place, the elevated residence of the then Mr. Jeffrey (2). I proposed that we set up a review; this was acceded to with acclamation. I was appointed editor, and remained long enough in Edinburgh to edit the first number of the "Edinburgh Review"(3). The motto I proposed for the "Review" was, 'Tenui musam meditamus avena', 'We cultivate literature upon a little oatmeal'. But this was too near the truth to be admitted, so we took our present grave motto from "Publius Syrus", of whom none of us had, I am sure, ever read a single line (4); and so began what has since turned out to be a very important and able journal. When I left Edinburgh it fell into the stronger hands of Lord Jeffrey and Lord Brougham, and reached the highest point of popularity and success".

(1). Cockburn, Volume I, Page 118.

(2). Third story,- Leslie Stephen; Dictionary of Natural Biog.

(3). Was not formally appointed editor. Cockburn, Volume I, P.137.

(4). "Index Damnatur cum nocens absolvitur".

Smith, although claiming the honor of first suggesting the "Review", was most fearful of the results. He insisted upon absolute secrecy in the whole affair, and ever wanted the others to repair by back ways, one at a time, to the place of meeting. However, the members did retain their incognito, and were rather pessimistic as to the result of their bold and daring enterprise. The first three numbers were given to the publisher outright, he taking the risk and defraying all the expenses (1). After this Constable, the publisher, agreed to pay a certain fixed sum per sheet to every contributor.

The first number of the "Review" seems to have been the work of all the projectors in council, although Smith may have acted as the head. There was no official editor until the end of the first year, or at the time of the publication of the fourth number, when Jeffrey undertook the responsible duties of that office. He was by far the best man of the company for the position. He had studied criticism systematically, all his life, and had published some of his papers in one of the already existing journals (2). Moreover, he was the only one who remained steadfast to the enterprise. Brown and John Thompson stopped writing because of the extreme power of the editor, but held nothing personal against Jeffrey. Smith, Horner, Brougham, Allen and some others left Edinburgh within a couple of years, but still continued to send their contributions to the "Review". It may be well to note here that none of

(1). Cockburn, Volume I, Page 136.

(2). Monthly Review, June and July, 1802.

the projectors of the "Edinburgh" considered magazine writing as his principal vocation, but looked upon it merely as pastime, or as a subordinate occupation. This fact makes the success of the "Review" all the more remarkable, because the project was worth their best efforts, and should have received them.

Jeffrey's rule as editor of the "Edinburgh", a position he held for twenty-seven years, or until July, 1829, was eminently successful. He was given power to accept or reject articles as he pleased, and while he committed some indiscretions, both in politics and in criticism, he always defended what he thought to be just, and never receded from his honest opinion when once he had expressed himself.

Meanwhile his success in his real profession was very small indeed, but gradually he began to attain recognition, and to overcome the prejudices which were held against him because of his politics. In 1805 his wife died, but the shock drove him still closer to his work. By the time two years more had passed, his connection with the "Review", coupled with his really great qualities, made him a universal favorite at the bar, and though his fees were still small, his growing reputation promised better things for the future. In 1806 Jeffrey had a difficulty with Moore, because of a severe criticism of the morality of some of the latter's poems (1). A duel without serious results occurred, and the participants were afterwards warm friends. In 1810 he fell in love with a Miss Wilkes, an American girl who was visiting some relatives who were in

(1). See Edinburgh Review, July, 1806.

England because of the serious trouble in France. Miss Wilkes soon returned to America, and three years later Jeffrey resolved to brave the sea, which he had always hated and feared, to visit the young lady in her home. Their marriage took place soon after he landed. While in America Jeffrey met some of the great statesmen of the new Republic, notably Madison and Monroe (1), and when he returned to England, he was a warm friend of everything American.

From now on, Jeffrey began to take a prominent part in politics, uniformly supporting the weaker party, although his advice to both parties was "greater moderation". He was still a strong Scotch Whig, and entered with his customary activity into all their plans. The whigs had now come to power, and he was at last in line for political preferment. In 1829 he was elected dean of the Faculty of Advocates, and upon his election, severed his connection with the "Edinburgh Review"; so his last article as a regular contributor appeared in October of the same year.

Since he is not from this time actively connected with the "Review", the main facts of his later life may be stated briefly. In 1830 he was appointed Lord Advocate, but does not seem to have cared greatly for the honor (1). Two years later, after the passage of the Reform Bill, he was elected to Parliament with Abercrombie. His career here was not an extraordinary success, however, because he was almost too old for the drudgery involved, and was too much of an elegant

(1). Cockburn, Volume I, Page 306.

essayist to become a good debater (1). He was not sorry , therefore, to quit the body for a judgeship in the Court of Sessions in 1834. He gave himself up to these duties with his customary zeal, and a few years later was removed to the first division of the court, where he no longer had to give his judgment in writing. He was very popular and open minded while on the bench, but as in criticism, was given to volubility and versatility (1). Meanwhile his health gradually became poorer; his whole system seemed to be sinking, and it was evident that he could not last long. He retained his mental faculties and his literary instincts to the last, and never ceased to enjoy criticism. At length an attack of bronchitis and feverish cold hastened his disease, and he died at his home on January 26, 1850(2).

It may not be out of place, even in so short an article as this, to add a short sketch of the other three prominent Edinburgh Reviewers, the only ones of the company who approached Jeffrey in ability, - Horner, Smith and Brougham. Horner seems to have been a solid, plodding, matter-of-fact Scotchman; a man who could neither understand nor tolerate a joke, and who made up for his common-placeness by tremendous energy and systematic labor. Sydney Smith says that he was "the best, kindest, simplest, and most incorruptible of mankind "(3) and that "he had the Ten Commandments written on his face, and looked so virtuous that he might commit any crime with impunity"(3). The crowning virtue of his articles in the "Review" is solidity.

- (1). Leslie Stephen in Dictionary of Natural Biography.
- (2). Cockburn, Volume I, Page 407.
- (3). Leslie Stephen, Hours in a Library, Volume II, Pages 250-251

Concerning Brougham not quite so much good can be said. It cannot be determined just how much he had to do with the the first numbers of the "Review" (1), but he certainly wrote a great deal later. He could sit down and dash off almost any quantity of literary matter without a moment's hesitation. He was brilliant, erratic, voluminous, and almost beyond the control of his colleagues. He used the "Review" for political purposes, and tried alternately to bully or to entreat Jeffrey to lend an ear to his opinions alone. In fact, he was almost as dangerous to his own companions as to his political enemies. The works of such a writer, cannot be lasting; they are too commonplace and careless, and contain arguments that would be effective only at the time they were written. Nevertheless, Brougham was an important contributor, and wrote more of the "Review" than any of the other early writers. That Jeffrey valued his services greatly is shown by the diplomatic skill with which he tried to keep his brilliant and headstrong companion in line.

Next to Jeffrey, Sydney Smith was the best of the Edinburgh Reviewers. He is brilliant, versatile, and humorous, and has all the solidity of Horner without his stupidity. He displays a great deal of talent and originality, but seems content with a mediocre development of these qualities. There is something quaint and good-natured about Sydney Smith's style, and his articles are very enjoyable compared with some of the other heavier contributions in the "Edinburgh". Nearly

(1). See note on page 251, Leslie Stephen, Hours in a Library, Volume II. Also see expression, "commonly ascribed to Lord Brougham". Cockburn, Volume I, Page 131, and see also list of names, Cockburn, Volume I, Page 136.

all of Sydney Smith's pleas for reform are logical, full of common-sense, and mixed with just enough humor to make them interesting; and, coming after the dry hack-writing, to which the public for the most part was accustomed, they must have been very effective.

Since Jeffrey resigned his position as editor of the "Edinburgh Review" in 1829, and this short sketch is to cover the ground up to 1840, it becomes necessary to add one more name to our list of reviewers deserving short biographical treatment.

Macvey Napier (1), the son of John Macvey, was born at Kirhintilloch, April 11, 1776. The discrepancy of names is caused by the fact that at the request of his Grandfather Napier, John Macvey changed his name to Macvey Napier. He was educated in his village schools, at Glasgow University, and still later went to Edinburgh. He studied law, but his tastes being literary rather than legal, he began to write early, and was a strong friend of Archibald Constable, the book-seller and publisher. In 1805 he began to contribute articles to the "Edinburgh Review", and a little later also wrote for the "Quarterly". In 1814, at the request of Constable, he undertook to edit a supplement to the sixth edition of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica", and in trying to secure articles for this work, he met many of the best writers of the day. In 1824 he was elected to a professorship at Edinburgh University, and three years later began to edit the seventh edition of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica". It was about this

(1). Leslie Stephen, Dictionary of Nat. Biography, "Napier".

time too, that Jeffrey resigned his editor's chair, and was succeeded by Napier.

The "Review" did not hold so prominent a place while it was conducted by Napier as it had held while under Jeffrey, but this was because of its many active rivals, and the great improvement in magazine writing. Napier was a man of good sense, tact and firmness, and the articles published in the "Review" are, on the whole, better than those published during Jeffrey's rule, for Napier secured the services of many of the most eminent writers of the day; notably, Macaulay, Carlyle (1), J. S. Mill, Thackeray, Bulwer and Hallam. His great tact is shown by the fact that he was able to keep Brougham - a troublesome person under Jeffrey, too - and Macaulay from an open breach with each other and with the "Review". However, Napier does not rank with Jeffrey as a writer, and perhaps not as a managing editor, for we must keep in mind one fact,- that Jeffrey started the "Review" and brought it up to a strong, healthy condition before Napier was called upon to act as its head. But the choice of Napier to continue the work was a good one, and whatever ground the "Review" lost under his management, should be attributed to some other cause; social or political; but at any rate, external.

(1). Carlyle also wrote for Jeffrey.

II

CAUSES OF THE SUCCESS OF THE EDINBURGH REVIEW

The success of the "Edinburgh Review" was, from the printing of the very first copy, extraordinary. The issue of a magazine new in style, thought, and substance came as a welcome surprise to the reading public. Still greater was the pleasant shock of the projectors, for none had expected more than ordinary approval, and Jeffrey had predicted even total failure (1). Nor did the effect stop with the first number: subsequent issues served only to increase the shock. The magazine spread rapidly over the Kingdom, and Jeffrey boasted that within a month it was read by 50,000 thinking people (2). The sale sheet did not reach that number, but in those days of limited facilities for circulation, one copy served for many people.

In general, the causes of the success of the "Review" were: its own innate qualities; the external conditions of society and literature, which made a new magazine acceptable; and lastly, the skilful management of its editor, Jeffrey.

The following qualities may be considered as belonging to the magazine itself. In the first place, the articles in the periodical bore no signatures, and anonymity is often successful

(1). Cockburn, Volume I, Pages 129-130.

(2). Gates, Three Studies in Literature, Page 44.

(2). Hereafter this work will be referred to as "Gates".

in arousing interest and curiosity. Secondly, the judicial tone of the essays pleased the people. They were in just the right mood to be dictated to, and the magisterial air of the "Review" carried with it a spirit of convincing proof. More important still were its bold and reckless attacks upon all persons unlucky enough to bring themselves within its range. People deserving censure had cause to view the "Edinburgh" with fear. A fourth point is, that for the first few volumes at least, the magazine was non-partisan, or ostensibly so (1). However, political questions and live topics of the day were treated in a vigorous and healthy manner. A Scotchman is rather inclined to see things as either black or white, and the clear Scotch tone of the "Review", with the peculiar shrewdness brought to bear upon the subjects treated in its pages, created a deep respect in its readers. Finally, Jeffrey gathered about himself the most brilliant writers he could secure, among whom, besides those mentioned, were Davy, Watt, Elmsley, Thornason, Hamilton and Murray (2).

Perhaps the greatest cause of the success of the "Edinburgh Review", is the second general division; the conditions of society and literature. The "Review" came at just the proper time and in the right manner to fill a most important need in the matter of a literary and creative, and more especially a reviewing, periodical. It was a fortunate circumstance that Jeffrey and his set were brought into contact with these favorable conditions; Jeffrey saw his opportunity and seized it.

- (1). Saintsbury History of 19th Century Literature, Page 173.
- (2). Gates, Pages 44 - 45.

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, periodical literature was in a very crude state. There were a few newspapers, mostly political, but nothing at all bearing much resemblance to our modern magazines. Two periodicals, the "Monthly Review" and "Critical Review", though critical and creative, were rather rudimentary (1). These reviews had some contributors of note, such as Smollett, Southey, Goldsmith and Taylor, but the number was rather small, for generally speaking, authors did not like to write for the reviews of this period. Magazines were largely in the power of the book-sellers, and were used to a certain extent to advertise and promote their business. Thus these book-selling editors practically controlled the pens of all the writers who came within their grasp.

A good example of the conditions of the time may be seen in the management of the "Monthly Review" by Ralph Griffiths, a former book-seller. Griffiths (2) (1720 - 1803) kept a shop at the sign of the "Dunciad" in St. Paul's Churchyard, and here produced the first number of the "Monthly". It was not a success at first, but later brought in as much as 2,000 pounds a year.

Griffiths was not a scholar, nor had he the qualities of a critic, or of a writer; he was merely a shrewd common-sense business man. Everything which came into his hands was viewed from a standpoint of money value. He successfully controlled all his contributors, either by bullying or by fawning,

- (1). Saintsbury, History of 19th Century Literature, Page 167.
- (2). Leslie Stephen in Dictionary of Nat. Biography.

according to the temperament or the circumstances of the person. Such writers as Goldsmith were always getting into the power of Griffiths, though at that time Goldsmith had not attained to his later fame. He was generally in poor circumstances, and often in debt, and at these times Griffiths would pay his debts and give him a small sum of money in return for a few poorly written pages.

In 1757 Griffiths made a bargain with Goldsmith whereby the latter was to board and lodge with Griffiths, and in return act as sub-editor for the "Monthly". He stayed but five months, complaining that Griffiths tampered with his work, but the truth is, that Goldsmith was not a very efficient assistant.

Upon one occasion Goldsmith wanted a new suit of clothes to wear while taking the examination for an appointment as surgeon in the army, and Griffiths agreed to furnish the clothes in return for four reviews of the same number of books. The reviews were hastily scribbled and handed in according to agreement, and the clothes came duly from the tailor's whereupon Goldsmith, having failed in his examination, pawned both clothes and books. To clear himself he again had to sell his talent to the "Monthly Review" (1).

Most writers, however, did not fare so well as Goldsmith; many of them having to write for mere subsistence. The standard price paid for written material at that time was two guineas per sheet of sixteen printed pages, ⁽²⁾ or about fifty pages of pen-written substance. Moreover, the book-sellers controlled

{1}: Irving, Life of Goldsmith, Chapter 10.
{2}: Gates, Page 48.

absolutely the style, thought and even the expression of their contributors, hence the latter lost all life, originality, and imagination, and their work became almost mere hack-writing. Under these conditions it is easy to see why authors of talent would not place their pens at the disposal of the magazine editors of the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Although it is sometimes stated that these early periodicals, though often wrong in their judgment, were honest and sincere in their criticisms, such does not appear to be the true statement of the case. The book-selling editor, with his mind upon the financial side of his periodical, very often praised, as editor, only those books from which he, as book-seller, expected to receive profits, while books often meritorious, handled by some one else were treated with indifference. Often a book written by one of an editor's coterie received favorable comment from the editor, and perhaps a very satisfactory review from some other writer of the same set. Thus it would seem that good literary matter and wholesome, impartial criticism were not ever present characteristics of magazines of the stamp of the "Monthly" and the "Critical".

These periodicals also tried to keep track of every book published, and in trying to do too much, they slighted those works that should have received careful thought and attention. "Tom Jones" and Gray's "Elegy" were dismissed with a single sentence each, while many dry, dull sermons and classical dissertations received lengthy notice (1), because sermons

(1). Stevenson, Early Reviews, Introduction, Pages 8 - 9.

rather than books were the talk of the day.

In the "Monthly Review" Burns is praised for his simple, artless, unadorned style, and the natural and sublime feelings that came directly from his heart; then he is severely criticised because his verses are in the Scotch dialect, which few people are able to understand (1). Coleridge is spoken of thus: "The author's first piece, 'The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere', in imitation of the style as well as of the spirit of the elder poets, is the strangest story of a cock and bull that we ever saw on paper; yet, though it seems a rhapsody of unintelligible wildness and incoherence (of which we do not perceive the drift, unless the joke lies in depriving the wedding guest of his share of the feast,) there are in it poetical touches of an exquisite kind " (2). In "Christabel" Coleridge is accused of "surreptitiously obtaining superb ideas "and of " attempting to dignify meanness of conception, to versify the flattest prose, and to teach the human ear a new and discordant system of harmony." In the same article the indignant critic scores "Lord Byron and some others" for daring to praise "such rude unfashioned stuff"; laments that every principle of correct writing has been given up, and that the observance of the old rules is now considered rank stupidity (3).

The "Critical Review" seems to have been of a better class as a critical magazine, at least while Smollett was editor.

(1). Monthly Review, December 1786.

(2). Monthly Review, May 1799.

(3). Monthly Review, January 1817.

It was his aim to have the "Critical" a scholarly review written by a society of gentlemen, who could boast of at least partial independence in money matters (1). It was not his desire to fill up his pages with material written in garrets by writers whose literary blood was as thin as that of their bodies, and who depended almost entirely upon their weak articles for sustenance (1). In this idea he succeeded only partially, for he lacked the ability to lift magazine writing from the low plane upon which it rested at that time.

The reviews of the "Critical" consisted of little more than short notices such as are put under the head of recent publications in our modern magazines. So many of the books that were really reviewed are lost or are so hopelessly forgotten now, that it is impossible to say whether the criticisms were impartial and well founded or not; but from a short study of Smollett's life, it would seem that he insisted upon the
(2)
reviewers being at least spirited and straightforward. The "Critical", while under Smollett, was bright and interesting, though it did not realize our ideas of a magazine.

There were other conditions in England which made a new and vigorous magazine very acceptable to the people. The catholics were not yet emancipated; the Corporation and Test Acts had not as yet, been repealed; the game laws were oppressive; prisoners tried for their lives were not sure of honest, painstaking counsel; libel was punished severely; the principles of political economy and just government were not understood;

(1). Hannay, Life of Smollett. Pages 141 - 142.

(2). " " " " " 142.

the laws covering debt, conspiracy, and slave trading were on a bad footing (1); in short, the new movement displayed all over Europe and America had unsettled England, and had not yet fitted itself to existing conditions. The "Edinburgh Review" grasped these circumstances fully, and by a series of skilful, unbiased articles brought itself into favor with the people, and helped substantially to lessen or to remove these troubles (2). Men wanted articles upon live topics of the day, and not so many scholarly essays upon books, especially when sometimes they could understand neither essay nor book. Of course the "Edinburgh" was meant to be a reviewing magazine, and did not until 1809 become the open organ of the Whigs (3), but nevertheless it stirred the people to thinking upon these political questions, and led them to a keener appreciation of their value to the country. Very often an opinion upon politics was put forth in the review of some book, when the only mention of the book itself was upon the title page of the reviewer's article (4). So, book-reviewing became a blind for the treatment of political topics, and short argumentative essays took the place of long, technical criticisms.

The last, and not the least important cause of the success of the "Edinburgh Review" was Jeffrey himself. He may really be called the founder of reviewing, and was literally the soul of the "Edinburgh"; but yet his success is due fully as much to the way he managed the magazine, as to his own personality.

(1). Sydney Smith, Works in one Volume. Pages 3 - 4.

(2). " " " " " " Page 4.

(3). Gates. Page 40.

(4). Hazlitt, Table Talk 2d series Essay 6.

When the "Review" was started Jeffrey made it a quarterly, hence its judgment upon live topics was more mature than that of a monthly, and writers were given more time to select the best subjects for criticism and discussion.

The "Edinburgh" was free from book-sellers, and was controlled by its editor, Jeffrey, who received a salary of 300 pounds per year for his services (1). Moreover, Jeffrey, realizing that if he would secure the best talent a substantial increase in the price paid for material would be necessary, raised the pay of his contributors from the old scale of the "Monthly" up to from ten to sixteen guineas per sheet, and later on paid as much as twenty and twenty-five guineas (2). It was the invariable rule also, that every writer should receive his pay, hence there were no nice distinctions drawn between those who really needed the money, and those who wrote only for pleasure (3).

In reviewing, Jeffrey paid no attention to common books and articles, but allowed the "Review" to concern itself only with meritorious productions, hence the magazine was put upon a much higher plane than that of the weaker journals preceding it. His was essentially the rule of the editor, and not of the book-seller; the despotism of the latter was destroyed. Moreover, book-reviewing was put upon a new and healthy footing. Hence, taken altogether, the management of the "Edinburgh Review" was well fitted to existing conditions of society and literature and was a valuable model for other periodicals started later on.

(1). Gates. Page 52.

(2): Cockburn, Volume I. Page 136.

(3): Gates. Page 53.

III

CRITICISM OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

For a period of almost twenty-five years the "Edinburgh Review" exercised immense power as a critical magazine, and supreme among the critics of that time was its editor Jeffrey. Although much of Jeffrey's fame is due to the extraordinary success of the "Review", and much of its brilliancy is reflected upon him, he really was a great critic. Talfourd unjustly calls him a man of little wit or imagination, and says he has "no clear view of any great and central principles of criticism" (1), yet for a long time he astonished and delighted his readers, and held the temporary fate of authors in his hands. Carlyle, who should not have been prejudiced, owing to the treatment he once received at the hands of Jeffrey, says: "There has no critic appeared among us since, who was worth naming beside him -- and his "Edinburgh Review" was a kind of Delphic Oracle (2)" In accepting this statement, however, the reader must remember that it was made while the "Edinburgh" was fresh in its power.

The study of the "Edinburgh Review" as a critical magazine, is really the study of Jeffrey as a critic, and research will present to us many different phases of him, some

(1). Gates, Page 2.

(2). Carlyle, Reminiscences, II, Page 221.

of them contradictory. He seems to have inherited the dogmatic idea of former critics; namely, that the critic has a right to express as final judgment, his own views. He held that only a select few are capable of appreciation in literature, and placed himself at the head of those few. Judged from our modern standpoints Jeffrey is not an ideal critic. "Jeffrey rarely appreciates a piece of literature, interprets it imaginatively, lends himself to its peculiar charm, and expresses this charm through sympathetic symbolism. " (1) It is necessary for a critic to appreciate and interpret a work whether he passes judgment upon it or not, but Jeffrey often reversed this order; he frequently gave his decision without either appreciation or interpretation. He is either for or against the author and never puts himself in the mood of the latter. His intellect is nimble rather than penetrating; his knowledge wide rather than profound; his sensibility stronger than his sense. (2). He was very much set against anything he could not understand, and this accounts partly for his distaste for Wordsworth's mysticism and Goethe's realism. He was an advocate of the conservatism of the eighteenth century, and as such was ardently opposed to the Romantic or Liberal Movement of the nineteenth century. "Conservatism in art and literature lies in discovering the principles that inspired the great masters of early times, and in applying them to our own circumstances." (3) The above statement expresses very closely, Jeffrey's sentiments. He wanted to

(1). Gates, Page 12.

(2). Craik, English Prose, Volume V, "Jeffrey."

(3). Courthope, The Liberal Movement in English Literature, P. 39.

apply the principles of early writers to nineteenth century literature.

His principal objections to the new movement were:- first, its nonsensically mystical sentiment; second, its falsification of life by introducing too much personal emotion; third, its bad taste in democratic realism; and lastly, its mixture of earnestness and pretentiousness in treating the new idea of life. The writers of the Romantic school; Scott, Wordsworth, Southey, Keats, Coleridge and Byron received some severe criticisms at his hands, but if the remarks of the critic were unjust and mistaken, they were at least sincere. Neither stupidity nor malice caused them, but rather the belief that literature is an art, and requires care, diligence, and above all, convention (1).

To show these points a few examples are given from Jeffrey's critical reviews in the "Edinburgh" and it must be remembered that he shaped the criticisms of the "Review".

Jeffrey began his criticism of the "Excursion" with the now familiar quotation,- "This will never do "(2) and is very severe in his condemnation of the unintelligible emotion, the mysticism, and the mysterious ravings over common-place people and things. "The case of Mr. Wordsworth, we perceive, is now manifestly hopeless; and we give him up as altogether incurable and beyond the power of criticism," he says in another place (2) But these quotations are mild compared with the last paragraph of the review. The nature of the substance of the whole work

- (1). Craik, "English Prose", Volume V, "Jeffrey."
(2). Edinburgh Review, November, 1814.

is - "a puerile ambition of singularity engrafted on an unlucky predilection for truisms: and an affected passion for simplicity and humble life, most awkwardly combined with a taste for mystical refinements, and all the gorgeousness of obscure phraseology." (1). The essay on the "White Doe of Rylstone" begins thus : "This, me think, has the merit of being the very worst poem we ever saw imprinted in a quarto volume -- it seems to us to consist of a happy union of all the faults, without any of the beauties, which belong to his (Wordsworth's) school of poetry," (2) It is true that neither poem is in Wordsworth's best style, but they do not deserve such strong and sweeping statements as those just quoted.

Nor did any of the "Lakers" fare any better than Wordsworth. Speaking of badger baiting as a form of amusement among country gentlemen, Leslie Stephen says: "The rising school of Lake poets, with their austere professions and real weaknesses, was just the game to show a little sport; and accordingly Jeffrey blundered into grievous misapprehensions, and has survived chiefly by his worst errors. " (3)

Southey's "Thalaba" is characterized as setting all nature and probability at defiance;" as having a "low, feeble, disjointed style," and as "being a jumble of all the measures known in English poetry." At the end of the article Jeffrey betrays his reason for the severe arraignment - "the author has a partiality for that new school of poetry -- to which

- (1). Edinburgh Review, November, 1814.
- (2). Edinburgh Review, October, 1815.
- (3). Leslie Stephen, Hours in a Library, Volume II, Page 258.

he has sacrificed greater talents and acquisitions than can be boasted of by any of his associates,"(1) His "Madoc" is praised in certain parts, but "we must cease to admire Virgil, Pope, and Racine, before we can relish the beauties of Mr. Southey, and it (the poem) is well calculated to confirm our admiration of Mr. Southey's genius and capacity, and our dislike of those heresies by which so much of their merit is obscured." (2)

In dealing with Scott the "Review" was more gentle. His novels received a great deal of praise, and his poetry, though often severely treated was, on the whole, pleasing to the reviewers. The only faults in "The Lay of the Last Minstrel"(3) are heaviness and lack of invention, while in the essay on "The Lady of the Lake", (4) the poem is called good in spite of its several defects. The reason for this may be that Scott, in spite of the fact that he was a Romantic writer and did not cling to set form, careful versification, and polished language, was broad, free and natural, and was neither subtle nor fantastic. He was not minute like Keats, angry and passionate like Byron, nor fast following all rules as was Coleridge. However, the poem "Marmion" (5) received severe unfavorable criticism; the passage of the bottle scene only, is an exception. The unpleasantness between Scott and Jeffrey had its beginning in this article, and was one of the several causes of Scott's later support of the "Quarterly."

(1). Edinburgh Review, "Thalaba," October, 1802.

(2). " " , April, 1805.

(3). " " , " "

(4). " " , August, 1810.

(5). " " , April, 1808.

In his treatment of Keats, Jeffrey eulogizes, and very justly, the beauties of that poet. In two reviews, one of "Endymion" (1), and the other of "Lauria, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes and Other Poems" (2), the critic is warm in his praises of their beauty, and is especially pleased with the first named, because it resembles the older writers. But in a few remarks upon "Hyperion" (3), he regrets that "the subject is so far removed from all the sources of human interest."

Coleridge received the worst scoring of all the Lake poets. In a review of the volume containing "Christabel": "Kubla Khan, a Vision," and "The Pains of Sleep," Jeffrey says: "We look upon this publication as one of the most notable pieces of impertinence of which the press has lately been guilty -- the other productions of the Lake School have generally exhibited talents thrown away upon subjects so mean that no power of genius could ennoble them; or perverted and rendered useless by a false theory of poetical composition. But even in the worst of them, if we except the "White Doe" of Mr. Wordsworth, and some of the laureate odes, there were always some gleams of feeling or of fancy. But the thing now before us is utterly destitute of value. It exhibits from beginning to end not one ray of genius -- must we then be doomed to hear such a mixture of raving and driv'ling, extolled as the work of a 'wild and original genius' simply because Mr. Coleridge has now and then written fine verses, and a brother poet (Byron) chooses, in his

- (1). Edinburgh Review, August, 1820.
(2). " " " 1820.
(3). " " " 1820

milder mood, to laud him from courtesy or from interest?" (a)
The rest of the paragraph is too long to give here, but it might serve as an excellent example of Jeffrey's skill in invective. In another article he classes Coleridge with the Lake poets, (1) "that powerful school of misdirected genius," and later on severely handles his "Biographia Literaria" (2), calling it an apology for his (Coleridge's) life and opinions, rather than an account of them.

Finally, we come to Byron, the last of the Romantic writers we shall consider. In a criticism on "Poems by George Gordon, Lord Byron, a Minor" (3), the "Review" made use of some very pointed satire, and not content with attacking the poetry, gave the author a thrust. This brought forth a scorching reply from Byron under the title of "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," a rather childish outburst of passion, but a poem containing some truth about reviewing, nevertheless. To this poem Jeffrey replied in his review of "Childe Harold" (4), and it is only fair to say that he was not far from wrong in his criticism after all.

There can be no doubt that Jeffrey preferred those writers who followed in the footsteps of the old masters, and who took a common, prosaic, though aristocratic, view of life. Crabbe, a poet seldom read now, was the recipient of much favor at his hands. The critic is pleased with his "perfect pictures

- (a). Edinburgh Review, September, 1816
- (1). Edinburgh Review, November, 1812.
- (2). " " , August, 1817.
- (3). " " , January, 1808.
- (4). " " , February, 1812.

of humble life" and his "force and truth of description" (1), yet the author "wastes his time upon unworthy subjects." (2) That there could be any poetry in commonplace subjects, Jeffrey was unable to comprehend.

Rogers and Campbell, however, are the poets who strike an answering chord in the heart of the great reviewer. The former's "Human Life " (3) pleases Jeffrey, and he says so very plainly. Speaking of Campbell's "Gertrude of Wyoming," he is pleased to see " a polished and pathetic poem in the old style of English pathos and poetry" (4), and he is lavish in his praises of "Theodoric" (5), by the same author. Now, granting that the last mentioned authors are good, and that the Romantic poets have their faults, it is an inexcusable series of blunders which brings Jeffrey to the following conclusion: "The tuneful quartos of Southey are already little better than lumber:- and the rich melodies of Keats and Shelley, and the fantastical emphasis of Wordsworth, and the plebian pathos of Crabbe are fast melting from our view. The novels of Scott have put out his poetry. Even the splendid strains of Moore are fading into distance and dimness, except where they have been married to immortal music: and the blazing star of Byron himself is receding from its place of pride. --- The two who have longest withstood this rapid withering of the laurel -- are Rogers and Campbell; neither of them voluminous writers, and both distinguished for the fine taste and consummate elegance

(1). Edinburgh Review, April, 1808.

(2). " " , " 1810.

(3). " " , March, 1819.

(4): " " , April, 1809.

(5): " " , January, 1825.

of their writings, than for that fiery passion and disdainful vehemence, which seemed for a time to be so much more in favour with the public."(1)

In spite of the strong tendency of the "Edinburgh" to uphold the principles of the older class of writers, we find many statements which go to show that Jeffrey had a warm spot in his heart for Romanticism after all. He exalts Shakespeare and the Elizabethan poets, and does not admire to excess Addison, Pope, and other classical writers. In fact, he is a bundle of contradictions in his literary taste. Notwithstanding these blunders and contradictions, it is the general opinion of writers of to-day that Jeffrey really was sincere in all of his criticisms, and that his mistakes arise from the indefinite ideas of literature in his own mind, and from a wrong impression of the functions of criticism. As a critic he is surpassed by Lamb, Hunt, Hazlitt and Coleridge, yet because of his brilliant and resourceful mind and his versatility, coupled with his position as editor of the great "Review," he was enabled to hold the position of an autocrat in criticism at the time he wrote (2)

However, Jeffrey should be given credit for one valuable theory of criticism; the application of historical environment to the study of literature. Probably, as Gates says, he borrowed this from France and Germany, but he was at least, a very clever borrower. His historical method he works out

(1). Edinburgh Review, October, 1829, "Felicia Hemans."

(2). Gates, Page 50.

thus,- granting that human nature is everywhere the same, literature may be divided into two classes: first, literature that corresponds to the different stages of civilization, and second, literature that springs up because of some special condition of law or government, or any other specific cause, such as revolution (1). His theory is true enough, but it is not very well worked out, and he finds some trouble in applying it to specific cases; but the reason for this may be that he does not know enough history to apply successfully his principles. This is very likely to be the case in the study of contemporary literature, at least. "Perhaps the most damaging accusation that can be brought against Jeffrey as a critic, is inability to read and interpret the age in which he lived (2)." This, it would appear, is the explanation of many of the blunders he made concerning literature of the nineteenth century, and his dogmatism is probably responsible for most of the others.

Since this study so far, has been rather unfavorable to Jeffrey's critical ability, it may be well to sum up his good and his bad points, and discover what it was that brought him to the height of critical power in the first quarter of the last century. Briefly, these points are as follows:- First,- he cannot appreciate literature because of his over-intellectualism; he cannot lend himself to the charm of a work, but always keeps coldly distant. Second,- his articles, though dogmatic, are readable because of the dashing and

(1). Edinburgh Review, August, 1825, "Wilhelm Meister."
(2). Gates, Page 38.

skillful style, and the evident sincerity and openness. Third,- he represented the taste of a brilliant and widely read set, who were bright and full of literary feeling, but yet were of narrow and limited range. Fourth,- although he was often bitter, peremptory, and very much prejudiced, his ethical qualities in criticism had a tendency to ennoble and to purify the art. Fifth,- he took a deep interest in social affairs; and expressed his opinions upon these matters in many of his book reviews; this enlarged the borders of literary criticism. Sixth,- his historical principle, though good in theory, was of little value to him because he failed to apply it in a pure state, but mixed it with dogmatism, and misconceptions of literature. At any rate, he did not use the theory correctly in dealing with Pope, Addison, and the Romanticists. Finally,- he was a censor rather than a critic, and had a decided tendency to pick flaws rather than to discover merits. These characteristics were, however, just the kind to bring Jeffrey great glory in the early part of the century, and these, with his great popularity, and the fact that his "Review" was a change from the indifferent work that had constituted reviewing up to this time, won for Jeffrey the universal respect of the reading public; hence, much of his fame as a critic is due to the new methods of reviewing embodied in his magazine.

But after all, Jeffrey was nearer right in many of his statements concerning the literature of the nineteenth century, than is generally believed. A quotation from one of our later critics will show that the world was not quite ready to appreciate the Liberal Movement. "The burst of creative

literature through the first quarter of this century had about it something premature. This prematureness comes from its having preceeded without having its proper data; without having sufficient materials to work with. In other words, the English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy, plenty of creative force, did not know enough. This makes Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, Wordsworth even, profound as he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety (1)." I believe it no exaggeration also, to say that Jeffrey ranks higher as a critic to-day than he did forty or fifty years ago, when he was overwhelmed by the Romantic School.

(1). Mathew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Pages 6 and 7.

IV

CRITICISM OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

Having stated briefly the criticism of the "Edinburgh Review" upon English Literature, it may be interesting to note what attention the great periodical paid to the literature in America. The treatment was not very extensive because there was very little American Literature at that time, and of that little, much was not worth noticing. It may be well to note here, also, that Jeffrey was very much interested in America; indeed, almost every volume of the "Review" contained some information about the new Republic, but attention has been given only to those articles which treat of American authors or of American Literature.

The first mention of our literature in the "Edinburgh" is a review of the "Transactions of the American Philosophical Society. (1)" The work is characterized by a "want of refinement in belle-lettres" and by its "language of a ludicrously sentimental class, as a substitute for the eloquence and power of fine writing." The volume is pronounced not worth the labor it would take to wade through it.

Adam's "Letters on Silecia" is treated very much better than the work just mentioned. "The style is English"-

(1). Edinburgh Review, July 1803.

no moderate praise for American compositions - "and there are a few national peculiarities, almost provincial, but on the whole it is very free from the affectations and corruptions of phrase that overrun the productions of that country."(1) For two years nothing more is said on our subject, but in 1806 Jeffrey wrote a review on "The Complete Works of Dr. Benjamin Franklin," and in that article regrets the slowness of American writers to collect and give to the world such splendid works as those of Franklin.(2) Jeffrey was an ardent admirer of the great American, and regarded him somewhat in the light of an accident in a rough, uncultured, and wholly commercial country.

During the next few years considerable attention was given to the study of American customs, laws, and society, but there is little mention of letters, except a few very brief remarks on Dwight, Fessenden and Randolph.(3) However, in a review of two books on the "Life of Washington," one by Ramsey and the other by Marshall, the "Edinburgh" regrets that American Literature lacks taste, and is faulty in diction and phraseology. The reason set forth in the same article, is that "every particle of intellect is attracted to active occupations," and that when a greater number of Americans secure wealth and leisure, good literature will surely follow, for "learning cometh by opportunity of leisure, and he that hath little business shall become wise."(4) This point is brought out further in a review of the "The Columbiad: a Poem,"

- (1). "Edinburgh Review," October, 1804.
- (2). " " " July, 1806.
- (3). " " " April, 1807.
- (4). " " " October, 1808.

by Joel Barlow (1). The reviewer ascribes our want of literature to our occupations, and not to our age, for "they are an old people though in a new country." Barlow is characterized as having a strong and resolute understanding, but as having no gift of simplicity or pathos; no loftiness of genius or delicacy of taste." He has none of the higher elements of a poet in him.--- His style is cumbrous and inflated -- a mixture of homeliness and flatness, with a sort of bombastic and turbulent elevation.(2)"

About two years after the appearance of this article, the trouble which culminated in the "War of 1812" began to grow serious. The "Review" published several articles upon the most important issues, and was, on the whole, very fair towards America. It predicted accurately the results to both nations, but underrated the power of the smaller, probably because of ignorance of America, mixed with patriotism for its own country.

After the war the "Review" paid no attention to literature until 1817, but we know that it had some influence in America, for in 1815 the "North American Review" was modeled after the "Edinburgh" and the "Quarterly," and under the guidance of some prominent authors of ability, "maintained its dignity for more than fifty years. (3)" Two years later, upon the publishing of the "Private Correspondence of Dr. Franklin," the "Edinburgh" printed what may almost be pronounced eulogy

(1). "Edinburgh Review," October, 1809.

(2). " " " " "

(3). Wendell, A Literary History of America. Page 262.

upon the statesman and philosopher (1). The magazine has nothing but praise for him, and in the several articles adverse to American Literature, which appeared later, Franklin is always made an exception to the general criticism. A quotation from a review of "Travellers in the Interior of America" will illustrate this point, and also serve to throw some light on the "Edinburgh's" opinion of our literature. "Literature the Americans have none -- no native literature we mean. It is all imported. They had a Franklin, indeed; and may afford to live for half a century on his fame. There is, or was, a Mr. Dwight, who wrote some poems; and his baptismal name was Timothy. There is also a small account of Virginia by Jefferson, and an Epic by Joel Barlow -- and some pieces of pleasantry by Mr. Irving. But why should the Americans write books, when a six weeks' passage brings them, in their own tongue, our sense, science, and genius, in bales and hogsheads? (2)"

The "Edinburgh" is then silent for a short period, but soon in a review of "Statistical Annals of the United States of America," (a strange place for such a statement,) bursts forth again. "During the thirty or forty years of their independence, they have done absolutely nothing for the Sciences, for the Arts, for Literature, or even for the statesman-like study of Politics or Political Economy " ---- "In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or

(1). "Edinburgh Review," August, 1817.

(2). "Edinburgh Review, December, 1818.

statue? (1)" The remainder of the article is in the same spirit; and unfortunately the reviewer was, in the main, right.

However, the "Review" was full of admiration for the United States, notwithstanding its severe, though quite just, comments upon the literature of the nation. In the July, 1824, number of the "Review," America is praised for her economy, religious tolerance, absence of feudal institutions, freedom of trade, and her attentions to the subject of Education. England and America are compared in the above qualities, much to the detriment of the former. But in the course of the article the writer expresses his regret that America is so hostile to both the "Edinburgh" and "Quarterly Reviews." "We really thought at one time they would have fitted out an armament against the 'Edinburgh' and 'Quarterly Reviews', and burnt down Mr. Murray's and Mr. Constable's shops. ---- We, however, remember no other anti-American crime of which we were guilty, than a preference of Shakespeare and Milton over Joel Barlow and Timothy Dwight. That opinion we must still take the liberty of retaining. There is nothing in Dwight comparable to the finest passages of 'Paradise Lost', nor is Mr. Barlow ever humorous or pathetic, as the Great Bard of the English stage is humorous and pathetic. We have always been strenuous advocates for, and admirers of, America - - - but that Americans, who have done so much for themselves, and received so much from nature, should be flung into convulsions by English Reviews and Magazines, is really a sad specimen of

(1). Edinburgh Review, January, 1820.

Columbian juvenility (1)." The article then drops the subject of literature, and continues its discussion along other lines.

For nearly five years no mention worthy of notice is made of American Literature in the "Review," but in 1829 a long article was written on "Nations of Americans" and "Travels in America;" the former book, by Cooper. There is but one paragraph on literature, and in that the reviewer discredits some statements by Cooper concerning the excellence of literature in America, and the high taste of the reading public. "They pride themselves in political literature only - the remaining supply for their reading public is almost entirely the product of the English press (2)." In the October number of the same year, another article names Dr. Channing, Washington Irving, Brown, and Cooper as the only later American authors who have acquired any reputation in England. To Channing are given brilliancy, ease, faultless equability of style, and freedom from vulgarity and affectation. He is, however, deemed deficient in nerve and originality. Irving is spoken of as keeping up the traditional manners of the last age," and of "giving us England as she was a century ago.." "He gasped for British popularity - he came and found it. He was received, caressed, applauded, made giddy: the national politeness owed him some return, for he imitated, admired, deferred to us (3)." Brown is called

(1). Edinburgh Review, July, 1824.

(2). " " June, 1829.

(3). " " October, 1829.

"an inventor without materials," and his works "a banquet of horrors." "They are full to the disease of imagination, - but it is forced, violent, and shocking." The author goes on to say that this is to be expected in America, "where there is, generally speaking, no natural imagination." "Fiction must not be in the author's mind, but must belong to the age and country in which he lives. The genius of America is essentially mechanical and modern (1)." Cooper, continues the reviewer, is true to life, but goes too much into detail, and while he spends time over every detail of geography and action, his story drags. He repeats too often some remarkable fact, and allows his love of truth and correctness to run almost to tediousness and insipidity. Jonathan Edwards is characterized as "one of the acutest, most powerful, and, of all reasoners, the most conscientious and sincere. His closeness and candor are alike admirable. Those who compare his arguments with what Priestly or Habbes have written on the same question, will find the one petulant, and the other dogmatical (2)." The article then ends with a quotation from Channing, and a discussion of the same.

Except an article in the "Review" of July, 1830, upon the "Memoirs, Correspondence, and Private Papers of Thomas Jefferson," no mention is made of American literature in the "Edinburgh" for two years, but at the end of that time there appeared an article on "The Americans and Their Detractors,"

(1). Edinburgh Review, October, 1829.

(2). " " " "

a review of four books upon America (1). Little is said in the the essay about literature, but the reviewer does not agree with the derogatory opinion concerning it, expressed by the writer of one of the books (2). This writer says American literature "has not yet got the playful tone," which she considers the "last finish of a highly finished society." She calls Jefferson's posthumous works "a mighty mass of mischief;" ranks Bryant as the best poet of the Union, and makes the last statement in very flippant language indeed (2). The "Review" does not agree with such impertinent treatment, and the unfortunate author suffers accordingly. The "Review" doubts the truth of her statements, calls her opinions colored, and doubts her capacity to judge of conditions, or even to draw the right conclusions when the premises are correct.

Sometime later than this, there appeared an article on "Selections from the American Poets,(3)" which, in general, expresses very well the status of American Literature, as well as the feeling in both England and America concerning its standing. English critics, says the reviewer in substance, have been accused of "damning with faint praise," and of allowing national jealousy and a spirit of detraction to color their criticisms. The "Review" admits that there may be a spirit of jealousy in commerce, or in some line where America is a real rival; but in literature, never. England would be only too glad to welcome such a growth in America whereby her own literary prestige would be in danger. "But

(1). Edinburgh Review, July, 1832.

(2). Mrs. Trollope, "Domestic Manners of Americans."

(3). Edinburgh Review, April, 1835.

that day is yet distant - far too distant, we think, to excite either fear or jealousy on our part, or to warp our judgment in regard to their productions (1)." The article says further that America is too young to have a national literature; that this is the product of centuries. "In science --- government ---- legislation, she will doubtless proceed with vigour and success, but in poetry, philosophy, and classical literature the chance of her rapid progress seems more questionable." (2) The "Review" claims, and rightly, that it has always been just towards America, and seems hurt that its efforts have not been properly appreciated. The truth is, that America had no really great writer who had attained to much fame at this time.

In the next review of an American book, "Tucker's Life of Jefferson (3)," the only comment made upon the work is concerning the use of words distinctly local, or American; The work is so plain and ordinary that it excites neither praise nor censure. Since our authors are not mentioned in a review of Miss Martineau's "Travels in America,"(4) the severe criticisms of Dr. Channing's "Remarks on the Character and Writings of John Milton" may be considered next. The main thought of the criticism may be summed up by one or two sentences. "The taste which it (the article) displays is far from being correct; his diction is exceedingly affected: and the affectation is that of extreme vigour and refinement of thought, often when

- (1). Edinburgh Review, April, 1835.
- (2). " " April, 1835.
- (3). " " October, 1837.
- (4). " " April, 1838.

he is unmeaning, contradictory or obscure. His opinions on critical matters also indicate a very defective taste, and show that in his own practice of writing, he goes wrong on a false theory; and in pursuit of the 'striking'- the 'grand'- the uncommon"(1). In the three succeeding numbers of the "Review," America is treated briefly upon different subjects; her navy, government, society, etc., but no mention is made of literature, probably because no good work made its appearance during that year.

The treatment of American Literature by the "Edinburgh Review" was, on the whole, very fair. America really had produced very little work of merit up to 1840, and of that which had been written, the best received favorable notice in the "Review". The country was really too young to produce much good literature. Time had to be given to commerce, agriculture, manufactures, science, and politics, and Irving was the only writer who cultivated literature for its own sake. Our whole mass of literature is below the first class of that of England, and while that does not necessarily condemn it, yet it would cause English critics to resent the claims of American authors to genius. Moreover, we must remember the America of 1802 - 1840 is very different from the America of to-day. It was not so influential in worldly affairs; was not so broad and international. Local feeling was even stronger than it is now, and our literature was practically local. We had almost no writers in the first quarter of the

(1). Edinburgh Review, April, 1839.

century, and it is not at all strange that our literature was not appreciated so much abroad as it was at home. From these facts then, combined with the fairness of the "Edinburgh" towards America in all other directions, it would seem that the "Review" was uniformly fair, and it is certainly true that there was not so much severe censure showered upon American authors as there was upon the unfortunate Lake Poets.

V

THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF THE REVIEW

It will be remembered that the "Edinburgh Review" was started with the deliberate intention of making it stand for newer and more healthy principles than those of the other periodicals of the time. We have discussed how the "Review" succeeded in making a name for itself because of these innovations. Not the least among these was the broad, liberal, and yet moderate stand of the "Edinburgh" upon political and live questions of the day. The "Edinburgh Review", for the first seven years of its existence, was non-partisan, or at least it was "ostensibly so" (1). The fact that Jeffrey and his companions were Whigs does not mean that the "Review" was Whig. It exhibited only a tendency in that direction, and advocated nothing of the Liberal party which could not be accepted by any broad-minded man. Scott wrote for the "Review" and found no fault with its early sentiments; indeed, even as late as 1807 he asked Southey, who was a violent Tory, to become a contributor (2). I think we may safely say that whatever Whig tendency the "Edinburgh" had before 1808, was caused more by the fact that the magazine was inclined to fight for the weaker party, than because it favored the Liberals.

(1). Saintsbury, "History of 19th Century Literature." P.173.

(2). Leslie Stephen, "Hours in a Library," Vol. II. P. 224.

The Whigs happened to be the weaker party, but that is only a coincidence. The point is, that the "Review" espoused doctrines somewhat liberal because of good principle, and not because of politics.

But after October, 1808, the whole face of the "Review" was changed. In the number of this date was published the "Cevallos article," the combined effort of Jeffrey and Brougham (1). The article was the Whig view of the war in Spain and, of course, immediately stamped the "Edinburgh" as a Liberal magazine. Another thing which added to the interest of the situation was the foundation of the "Quarterly Review," the following year, which was to have for its aim, opposition of the "Edinburgh." However, even after the publication of the Tory "Quarterly," the "Edinburgh Review" was not a rampant, violent, Liberal magazine. Jeffrey and his associates, possibly Brougham alone excepted, still clung to their broad views, and now they found themselves between two fires. They were, of course, strongly opposed to the Tories, but on the other hand, were hardly as democratic as the Whigs wished them to be. This being the case, the "Review" was not given credit for its broadness and fairmindedness, but was accused of lack of principle, with motives more or less base. It was ever Jeffrey's aim to be broad and well-meaning, and to express his own honest views rather than those of any political party. However, the "Review" gained steadily in political importance and power up to the end of our period, 1840. It may be stated

(1). Cockburn, Volume I, Page 421.

too, that the older the "Review" became, the more did it favor the cause of the Whigs, and it was in this later period that rendered its most signal service to that party, though it had been serving the cause of England, or the common people, since its very foundation. Most of the questions taken up by the "Review" have been mentioned in Part II, in a passage taken from the "Works of Sydney Smith."

In 1802 the people were, for the most part, opposed to change, and many principles familiar to us now, were at that time just being agitated, or else were unheard of. Religious toleration was little understood, and the question of Catholic Emancipation was just coming to the front. The educational system was very poor, and it was the opinion of many that the common people ought not to be educated; that they would become dangerous if they were enlightened. The slave system was still in force, and Ireland was in a most wretched condition. Moreover, the people thought the conditions in the Island ought to be wretched, simply because nearly all the inhabitants were Catholics. The game laws were oppressive, the Court of Chancery was still in urgent need of reform, and cruel punishments were inflicted for slight crimes. We would naturally expect a band of firm young Whigs like Jeffrey and his companions to attack a state of affairs like this, merely because of their natures; it would not even be necessary for them to be Whigs. And this is just what they did from the very first number of the "Review." In fact, Jeffrey always considered "politics to be the right leg of

the 'Review'"(1). For some time there was little change, for the terror struck by the French Revolution drove the Government to the most extreme conservatism, but gradually this feeling began to wear away, and we have a series of important reforms. Green says: "The publication of the "Edinburgh Review" in 1802 by a knot of young lawyers at Edinburgh marked the revival of the constitutional and administrative progress which had been reluctantly abandoned by William Pitt"(2). It may be well to follow out briefly some of the most important of these reforms.

Repeated attempts had been made towards Parliamentary Reform and Catholic Emancipation, but the Perceval ministry had always opposed and defeated the attempts. The succession of Liverpool as minister caused the advance of Liberal sentiment throughout the nation, when everything received a check from the Napoleonic War, and the War of 1812. Castlereagh's influence was now stubbornly set against political progress of any kind, and he was supported by the King and ministers. Some relief was, for a few years, enjoyed under Canning, but his ministry was broken by dissention, and in 1828 Wellington headed a Tory Ministry with Peel as the principal leader. This seemed to be a death-blow to further progress in reform, but the Irish under O'Connell literally forced the admission of Catholics to Parliament, and the Whig out-burst which accompanied the act, coupled with the accession of William IV,

(1). Leslie Stephen, "Hours in a Library," Vol.II, Page 245, note.
(2). Green, "Short History of the English People." Page 790.

all combined to drive Wellington from office, and "for the first time in twenty years the Whigs saw themselves again in power under the leadership of Earl Grey" (1). This Ministry introduced a bill to throw out some of the "rotten boroughs" and to extend the right of franchise to others. The bill was defeated, but the country forced its passage at the next election in 1832. The Whigs then continued in power for ten years, 1831 - 1841, under Lords Grey and Melbourne. During this ten years the system of slave trade was abolished, the commercial monopoly of the East India Company was destroyed, pauperism was checked, and the Municipal Corporations Act restored to towns the right of self-government. In 1836 the General Registration Act was passed; the Act of Tithe Commutation put an end to the quarrels over tithes, and an act allowing civil marriage greatly relieved the Dissenters. Finally, a system of national education was begun and increased by steady grants. However, the Whigs did not have an entirely peaceful rule. In 1839 the "People's Charter" created a great deal of trouble, and this was added to by the Opium War with China, the out-break in India, the Canada troubles, and the stumbling blocks that Lord Palmerston was continually throwing in the way, so that in 1841 the Tories, or Conservatives, carried the election by a majority of nearly two hundred members.

Of course it would be impossible to say just how great the influence of the "Edinburgh Review" was in securing these much needed reforms, but we must allow a great deal of credit

(1). Green, "Short History of the English People," Page 798.

for the daring and persistence with which the "Review" followed out its early aims. The influence of the magazine may be easily over-estimated, and some of its political offences forgotten in the lapse of time between 1840 and the present. These political offences consist principally in arguments against the national war policy, and in very proper protests against the extreme measures of both political parties. The "Review" caused the people to think upon political topics, and supplemented these thoughts with helpful and thorough discussions in its pages. Another good point in the "Review" was, that it had the very best set of writers, taken all in all, of any periodical of its time, and they were just the men to give it strength. In dealing with the political side of the "Edinburgh" it must also be remembered that many of the reforms of the early part of the century were the natural result of the reaction against conservatism, and were bound to come sooner or later. The "Review", then, must be given credit only for hastening, or shaping to a certain extent, these reforms, and not for their creation. A great work was done by preparing the minds of the people for these reactions, and in placing the latter upon a firm basis, but we may safely say that the "Edinburgh" was not creative. Finally, we may also say that it was as fair and open as any other periodical of the time, and in the pages of those magazines that took delight in scoring the "Edinburgh", we shall find as much dogmatism, as much prejudice, as much political vehemence, and a great deal more libel and violent criticism. Not one of them can show freedom from the same faults with which they accuse the "Edinburgh".

VI

CAUSES OF THE DECLINE OF THE REVIEW .

When we turn to consider the causes that led to the decline of the power of the "Edinburgh Review," we find them to be both internal and external; that is, within and without the pages of the magazine, just as we found that both internal and external circumstances contributed to its remarkable rise and progress. Of the internal conditions we shall speak first, since they are few in number, and are the least in importance.

First, - the "Review" had changed from a non-partisan periodical, subscribed to by both political parties, to the powerful organ of the Whigs, and much of its matter, whether right or wrong, would be discarded by the public because of political prejudice; in other words, a fair minded man could no longer place dependence upon its opinions. Second,- it began to reflect only the current ideas of men, and almost ceased to cause men to think, by failing to present original conceptions to their judgment, as it once had done. Third,- its prophecies about, and its outbursts against, the war policy of the nation caused many people to condemn it as unpatriotic. Lastly,- its literary aims and ideals were allowed to suffer at the hands of its political efforts. These internal changes, it will be

admitted, are sufficient to weaken a strong magazine, but they were not entirely responsible for the decline of the "Edinburgh"; we shall find more important factors in the study of the times, remembering always that the "Review" must be considered in its relation to its own time. By this last statement is meant that the internal and external causes are coördinate; that either separate set of causes might have taken place without great material injury to the "Review," but that happening together as they did, there could be but one result, and that was - disaster to the "Edinburgh Review."

Primary among the external influences that caused the decline of the "Edinburgh Review," was the great increase of periodicals which followed the establishment of the former. Many of these took the "Edinburgh" for a model, and following in its footsteps for a time, soon learned to combat it with its own weapons. The first of these was the "Quarterly Review," established by William Gifford in 1809. This magazine was the organ of the Tories, and was founded almost for the sole purpose of opposing the "Edinburgh." It was successful from the first, and ultimately caused much trouble to its older opponent. The statement is sometimes made that the "Quarterly" did not hurt the "Edinburgh," because the subscription list of the latter increased immediately after 1809. The real state of the case is, that many bought the two magazines for purposes of comparison, and though opposition was at first a stimulus to the "Edinburgh," the "Quarterly" had come to stay, and very materially drew from the support of the older periodical. The

"Edinburgh" no longer stood alone; it was no longer the oracle of criticism and of public affairs. Briefly, the other magazines which entered the field were,- the "Blackwood's " in 1817, the "London" in 1820, and the "Westminster" and the "Retrospective" in 1824. There were others, but they were almost too insignificant to be mentioned as rivals of the "Edinburgh." These leading periodicals made a great change in the journalistic field, and it was inevitable that the "Edinburgh" should lose ground in the face of so much powerful opposition.

In connection with the establishment of these rivals, comes our second reason,- Tory opposition. It will be remembered that the "Edinburgh" became a Whig periodical after 1808, or at least its tendencies were Whig, and hence its Tory contributors and subscribers fell off, and became enemies. The misfortunes of the Whig party during almost the whole period between 1809 and 1831, and its many troubles while it was in power from 1831 to 1841, also contributed towards the decline of the "Edinburgh." The reason is obvious. The "Review" stood for certain Liberal principles; the people refused to support and acknowledge the wisdom of those principles, because they voted them down at nearly every election. If the people refused to support the principles of the "Review," it is very probable that they did not support the "Review" itself. That the "Edinburgh" was successful in 1802 is no argument against this statement; the magazine

did not in its earlier days depend upon politics for its success; it was more of a critical and literary magazine, and, moreover, had practically no opposition before 1809.

Another cause of the decline of the great "Review" was the development of criticism. When the "Edinburgh" first appeared, the dashing, brilliant, and versatile criticism of Jeffrey was something new. He had touched in a new way the field of literature. Later on, however, the critics of the other magazines took their cue from Jeffrey, and learned to meet him on his own ground, and so while the "Review" was not, as a critical review, actually weakened, yet it was weakened relatively, or in proportion to the other magazines of the time. Another reason was the relation of the "Edinburgh" to the Lakers. Jeffrey and his companions were not in sympathy with the Liberal movement in 19th century literature, and as the Romantic writers became more and more popular, the "Edinburgh" suffered a corresponding decrease. Here again we have the effect of the times. Modern critics uphold, to a pretty large extent, the views of Jeffrey on Romanticism, but the tide has only very recently turned that way. About the time Jeffrey retired from his position as editor, the influence was turning against him, and the Lake Poets were just rising to the height of their power. This, of course, counted against the "Review," and modern opinion has come too late to do any good.

In conclusion it might be stated that by "decline of the 'Edinburgh Review'" is meant merely its fall from the wonderful

position it once held. The "Review" was s strong magazine after 1840, but never again did it equal its early relative prosperity. It must be remembered, too, that this study includes only a very small portion of the field covered by the "Edinburgh Review," for besides its efforts in criticism and politics, the "Review" gave a great deal of attention to Natural Science, Mathematics, History, Philosophy, Metaphysics, and all the branches of learning that were much discussed during the early part of the nineteenth century; and the different kinds of art, too , were carefully considered. In fact, there was scarcely a department of culture that was not touched upon, and perhaps the greatest good of the "Edinburgh Review" was the diffusion of literature and learning that resulted from its publication.

- I. Jeffrey and the Early Reviewers.
- II. Causes of the ⁰³Success of the Edinburgh Review.
- III. Criticism of English Literature.
- IV. Criticism of American Literature.
- V. The Political Influence of the Review.
- VI. Causes of the Decline of the Review.

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3. Cockburn, "Life of Lord Jeffrey, " Volume I.
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8. Gates, "Three Studies in Literature."
9. Green, "A Short History of the English People."
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12. Irving, "Life of Goldsmith."
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